

The Cheese Counter

I found a great book the other day while indulging in a bit of *tachiyomi* in Roppongi. It's called 'The World Cheese Book', and it's an atlas of the best cheese in the world. Flicking through to the UK section I was delighted to see page after page of British cheese featured, from Lanark Blue in the north of Scotland Yarg in the south west of England. Adding it all up, it worked out that Britain has *dozens of* representatives among the great cheese varieties of the world. Japan, sad to say, has only 3.

I've always loved British cheese. Growing up in the country I had privileged access to farm fresh produce and used to take a 'piece' of farmhouse cheddar to school each day that was *nippy* (strong) enough to take the roof of your mouth off. I loved the colour of cheese, its texture and shape, the ambrosial fragrance. I loved *the huge variety of* cheese. And I loved the names – Stilton; Wensleydale; Buffalo Blue; Windrush and Celtic Gold; which spoke of regional pride, diversity and timeless quality.

Come to think of it, I was a bit like Grommit who once turned down a potential girlfriend because she didn't share his passion for coagulated milk curd. I'm not sure I would have gone that far (and I don't wear tank tops) but I did once ask for my very own cheese grater for Christmas, which is quite sad (and Wallace-like) enough.

These days it's ridiculously easy to get your hands on good quality cheese in the UK as specialist purveyors have flourished in recent years and even modestly sized supermarkets stock a *reasonable selection of* good local varieties. One cheese shop you really ought to visit is Paxton and Whitfield of Jermain street London. I once bought a *chunk of* the award winning Stinking Bishop there, which proved so pungent that my friend and I had to sit two seats down from it on the tube journey home. Thankfully the carriage was empty or the emergency cord might have been employed.

But if Japan has only a *handful of* highly rated cheese types that at least makes life simple. Simple to count I mean, and counting in Japanese is anything but simple. One of the quirkiest aspects of the Japanese language is its *sizeable collection of* counters – those specialist words we use when counting birds or books or long things or short things. It makes no sense at all but it has always appealed to me. English is much simpler in this respect but we do have *lots and lots of* quantity expressions and I've used a *fair number of* them in this article.

Sadly, the cream of British cheese is poorly represented in Japanese shops so your next trip to the UK will be your only chance to have a nibble at such delicacies as Red Leicester, Caerphilly or Markham Blue. My own personal favourite though is Cheshire, England's oldest cheese, a crumbly, creamy marvel, best served with blackcurrant jam and cider or sweet wine.

And there are a *great deal* more, of course, at least 1000 if some calculations are to be believed. But perhaps we shouldn't get too hung up on numbers; it's quality that matters. And after all, as grammarians will no doubt remind us, *cheese* is, strictly speaking, an uncountable noun. Isn't it?

<http://www.britishcheese.com/>
<http://www.paxtonandwhitfield.co.uk/>